

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-10 ISO-00 INRE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

USIE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OPR-02 A-01 SY-05 AID-05 OMB-01

OC-05 CCO-00 SCCT-01 /093 W
----- 098703

O R 031124Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7942

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN NY

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK

COMMSIXTHFLT

CTF SIX ZERO

CTF SIX ONE

CTF SIX TWO

CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO

FOSIF ROTA SPAIN

FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA

DIA WASHDC

CIA WASHDC

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 0029

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, PFOR, LE

SUBJ: MOSLEM LEADERS REACT TO MARONITE STANCE

REF: BEIRUT 20 (1242Z)

SUMMARY: THE SECURITY PICTURE REMAINS STABLE IN BEIRUT AND ELSEWHERE. AT A HIGH-LEVEL MOSLEM MEETING JANUARY 2, MOSLEM LEADERS REACTED ADVERSELY TO RECENT HARD-LINING MARONITE POSITION BUT KEPT DOOR OPEN TO "DIALOGUE". RENEWED SPECULATION THAT PARTITION MAY BE PREFERRED CHRISTIAN "SOLUTION" WAS FOCUS OF THIS MOSLEM MEETING, AND STATEMENT ISSUED AFTERWARD ATTACKED PARTITION IDEA EXPLICITLY. END SUMMARY

1. ALTHOUGH THERE WERE MINOR OUTBREAKS OF SHOOTING NIGHT OF JAN 2 - 3 GENERAL SECURITY SITUATION REMAINS CALM THROUGHOUT CAPITAL AREA. CITY VERY SLOWLY AND HESITANTLY COMING TO LIFE. REPORTS FROM TRIPOLI AND ZAHLE REGIONS ALSO GENERALLY GOOD.

2. POLITICAL SECENE STILL UNSETTLED IN WAKE OF HARD-LINING POSITION TAKEN BY MARONITE LEADERS (REFTEL). THERE WAS ANOTHER HIGH-LEVEL MOSLEM MEETING NIGHT JANUARY 2 AT SUNNI MUFTI'S RESIDENCE TO FORMULATE REACTION TO MARONITE STAND. MAJOR RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL LEADERS OF SUNNIS, SHIITES, AND DRUZE ATTENDED WITH EXCEPTION KAMAL JUMBLATT WHO IS PREOCCUPIED WITH FUNERAL OF CLOSE RELATIVE. PLO'S YASSER ARAFAT WAS PRESENT.

3. FOCUS OF MOSLEM MEETING WAS CONCEPT OF PARTITION, WHICH MANY MOSLEMS FEAR IS EMERGING AS PRIORITY CHRISTIAN "SOLUTION". REMARKS OF RAYMOND EDDE IN PARIS PRIOR TO HIS RECENT RETURN TO BEIRUT AFTER VISITING U.S. AND EUROPE HAD ALSO STIRRED UP MOSLEMS. (EDDE WAS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT "THE AMERICAN ADMINISTRATION BELIEVES THE LEBANESE CRISIS

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IS AN AFFAIR AMONG LEBANESE, AND IF THE PARTITION OF LEBANON OCCURS, THE UNITED STATE WOULD NOT FIND THAT TROUBLESOME AT ALL.") MOSLEM LEADERS ISSUED STATEMENT AFTER MEETING REAFFIRMING MOSLEM REFORM "DEMANDS", CRITICIZING MARONITE STANCE, AND EXPLICITLY WARNING AGAINST PARTITION. STATEMENT ALSO STATED MOSLEMS REMAINED PREPARED FOR "DIALOGUE", AND REPORTEDLY CONTACTS ARE UNDER WAY WITH PATRIARCH KREISH IN

EFFORT TO SOFTEN MARONITE LINE.

4. COMMENTS: DESPITE ROCKY ROAD ON POLITICAL FRONT, WE BELIEVE MARONITE POSITION IS PARTLY A BARGAINING TACTIC, AND RESPONSE OF MOSLEM LEADERS LEAVING DOOR OPEN TO "DIALOGUE" SUGGESTS THAT THEY SEE IT THE SAME WAY. THE MAIN QUESTION IS WHETHER OR NOT THE RELATIVE QUIET ON THE GROUND WILL HOLD LONG ENOUGH FOR THE BARGAINING PROCESS TO WORK ITSELF OUT. THE PLO WILL CERTAINLY DO ALL IT CAN TO KEEP THE LID ON THROUGH THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL SESSION IN MID-JANUARY, FOR THE LAST THING IT WANTS IS THE SPECTACLE OF VIOLENCE IN LEBANON DURING THAT DEBATE. THE ATTITUDE OF THE "REJECTIONIST" PALESTINIANS IS FAR LESS CLEAR, AND NEEDLESS TO SAY, THE CHRISTIAN HARD-LINERS CANNOT BE COUNTED ON TO PURSUE THE SAME MODERATION. WE UNDERSTAND MOVES ARE AFOOT AMONG CHRISTIAN LEBANESE RESIDENT IN THE U.S. TO USE THE OCCASION OF UNSC DEBATE TO DEMONSTRATE IN FAVOR OF CHRISTIAN-ORIENTED LEBANON.
GODLEY

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